



Testimony of ConnCAN
Education Committee Hearing
March 21, 2022

Testimony Regarding: SB 1, SB 273, SB 274, and HB 5465

Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members Representative McCarty and Senator Berthel, and other distinguished members of the Education Committee, my name is Subira Gordon and I am Executive Director of ConnCAN.

Today, I am here to testify on: [Senate Bill 1](#), [Senate Bill 273](#), [Senate Bill 274](#), and [House Bill 5465](#).

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1 and Senate Bill 274, with recommendations

The State of Connecticut has made significant progress in building a supportive environment for diversifying the educator workforce. We have achieved the 10% teachers of color target set three years ago, but we know more must be done. Our student population is rapidly diversifying, and our educator workforce must follow suit.

This year, ConnCAN is committed to building flexibility, filling key shortage areas that disproportionately impact students of color, and modernizing the educator workforce to reflect future talent needs.

Currently, the State Department of Education has taken the lead to build flexible certification pathways for out-of-state educators. In the coming days, they plan to implement an automatic certification transfer program, also referred to as reciprocity, with thirteen states and territories, including all states from Virginia to Maine, and Puerto Rico. This is an incredibly important step for Connecticut, and will help us recruit directly from postsecondary institutions in our neighboring states. ConnCAN looks forward to the implementation of this program, and for the expansion of applicable states over time.

Senate Bill 1 makes key investments in postsecondary education program scholarships for students from Priority School Districts, whose student population is 83.1% students of color, on average. The scholarship program supports students up to \$20,000 a year for their education. This is life changing. We hope there are opportunities to expand the available fund for this.

Senate Bill 274 contains important mechanisms for studying and evaluating the quality of our collective efforts on diversifying the educator workforce. ConnCAN believes that measurement and evaluation are essential for high-quality programming, and for strategic planning.

However, we are at a crossroads for diversifying the educator workforce. We must do more to ensure that our student and teacher populations match one another. Only then, can we be assured that our education system is adequately preparing all students for the diversity of the real world.

ConnCAN strongly recommends adding the following priorities to Senate Bill 1 and Senate Bill 274:

- **Organize to Transform:** Reconstitute the Minority Teacher Task Force to develop long-term targets and goals and rename it The Taskforce to Diversify the Educator Workforce;
- **Align Skills and Assessments for High-Quality Teaching:** We must reduce certification hurdles and costs to make sure that no student fails to become an educator because they cannot afford to pay for testing.
- **Retain our Best and Brightest:** We must invest in educators already working in our Alliance districts by offering a master's degree scholarship fund. That way, educators can grow in the field and commit to remaining in our neediest districts.
- **Incentivize what we Need:** We must provide signing bonuses for educators working in shortage areas like ELL, Special education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). More money should go to educators who begin working in our neediest districts. We recommend a \$30,000 bonus spread out over three years for Alliance Districts, with a smaller bonus structure available for high-achieving districts.
- **Cooperate to Increase Educational Access for College and Career Coursework:** We must find flexible ways to address educator shortages, like inter-district educator sharing. This allows numerous districts to offer college and career courses in partnership with neighboring districts. It reduces costs, expands access and encourages innovation.

Our educator workforce, like many in our state, is facing a retirement surge in the coming years. We have an obligation to modernize the recruitment and retention practices, aimed at hiring the best and brightest, diverse talent possible. If we succeed, we will be a national leader in this field, and will benefit from acting quickly and decisively.

Supporting the Work of Senate Bill 273

For years, Connecticut policymakers have discussed the complexity and incoherence of our teacher certification regulations. The State Department of Education has begun to look at overhauling the certification standards, and this bill provides an additional platform to focus on the issue. ConnCAN believes that by putting all the best minds on teacher certification together, we will be better situated to make the necessary changes. Also, we will be able to pressure test

ideas with individuals most impacted by the issue, namely teachers, principals, administrators, students and families.

In Support of .House Bill 5465

The key to a high-quality education system is early support and intervention. We lean on our birth-five programs to prepare our littlest ones for a successful K-12 experience. However, even with the overwhelming evidence that early childhood programs yield long-lasting positive results for children, we have not made the necessary investments in human capital.

Education is people work, done through strong relationships, and done with consideration for both the children participating and the adults entrusted to carry out the work.

We are long overdue to a salary improvement for our early childhood educators. Without them, the entire system of childcare and early childhood education and development breaks down. This would be devastating to our families, especially those from low-income, black and brown communities.

Inflationary pressures have severely dented the purchasing power of early childhood educators. And, the amounts prior to inflation were improperly low. So we must make up for lost time, and stabilize the employment sector for early childhood. Now, more than ever, is the time to invest.

Thank you.